

DAMAMA

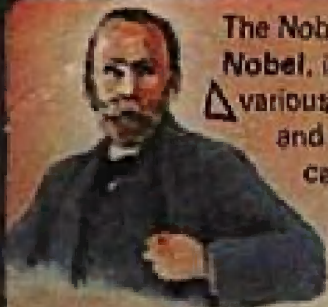
SEPTEMBER 1981

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Jeevan and Hanu get wise

LEARNING ABOUT THE NOBEL PRIZE



The Nobel Foundation was set up by the famous Swedish chemist **Alfred Bernhard Nobel**, inventor of dynamite. Each year, the fund is used to award achievers in various fields — Physics, Chemistry, Medicine and Physiology, Literature, Peace and Economics. Its headquarters are in Stockholm. In 1978, each category received a record \$161,000.

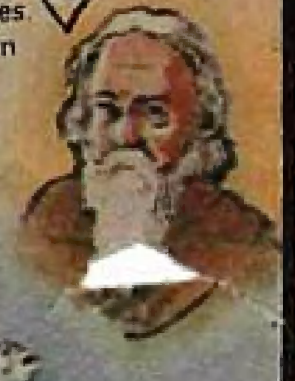
Marie Curie (1867–1934) was the only woman to win the Nobel Prize twice — in Physics in 1903 for isolating a radioactive element, and Chemistry in 1911 for the discovery of radium and polonium.



There have been several famous Indian recipients of the Nobel Prize. **Dr. C.V. Raman** was awarded the 1930 Physics prize for studying the exchange of energy between light and matter, later called the Raman Effect. **Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941)** won the 1913 Literature prize for his book of verses 'Gitanjali'. Another eminent Indian winner was Yugoslavian-born **Mother Theresa**, who received the 1978 Peace prize.



An institution that has won the Nobel Prize 3 times (1917, 1944 and 1963) is the **International Red Cross**. During wartime its first concern is to look after wounded people. Its peacetime activities include first-aid, blood banks, accident prevention and other humanitarian services.



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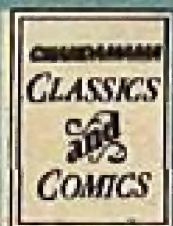
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PLUS SIX COMPLETE STORIES
AND SEVEN OTHER FEATURES

GOLDEN WORDS OF YORE

यत् तदग्रे विषमिध परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।

तत् सुखं सार्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् ॥

Yat tadagre viṣamīva pariṇāme'mṛtopamaḥ ।

Tat sukham sāttoikam proktamātmabuddhiprasādajam ॥

At first as fearful as poison — but ultimately as beneficent as the nectar, is the experience of the person who through purity has learnt to live in the sublime happiness of his inner state of mind.

Srimadbhagavac Gita



Controlling Editor : NAGI REDDI

THE CHANDAMAMA DICTIONARY OF SELECT WORDS AND PHRASES

"To make dictionaries is dull work," said Samuel Johnson (1709-1784). But the dictionary he compiled, one of the earliest in the English language and a famous one, was far from dull reading. This is how he defined many of his words:-

Excise duty: a hateful tax levied by wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.

Pensioner: a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey his master.

(By the way, when Johnson himself became a pensioner and was asked if his definition of the word still held good, he avoided the issue, saying, "I wish my pension were twice as large that they might make twice as much noise.")

But dictionaries today, while explaining a word, do not record the personal opinion of the compiler; they explain a word in a matter-of-fact manner. That is why dictionaries are dull. As a result, we do not feel inspired to read them for our reading pleasure.

Can there be a dictionary that would tell the young readers the meanings of words in an interesting way (without giving opinions!) and with the support of pictures? The *Chandamama's* answer is: Yes. From the next issue begins *The Chandamama Dictionary of Select Words and Phrases* that would include even the latest expressions you won't find in the dictionaries you usually consult!

akash 71;
raj b RA
bw b RA
lbw b
(batting)
le wkis):

121-run first innings lead and without being least interested in chasing an outright victory target of 112 in 18 overs set Sunil Gavaskar's declaration the Rest of India XI's second innings at 232 for five.

NEWS

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Remembering Past Life

A study by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences at Bangalore has found strong evidence in support of reincarnation. It made thorough investigation of cases of children who remembered who they were in their previous lives. What they claimed about the situation, family, and the modes of their death in their past incarnations were found to be true, says Dr. Satwant Pasricha of the Department of Clinical Psychology of the Institute.



Dangerous Customers

Chiderwala forest near Dehra Dun was the heaven of some people who produced illicit liquor in large quantity. One day a potful of it had been left outside. A horde of wild elephants tasted it. Drunk, they invaded the illegal distillery and drank up everything and wrecked the house. Thereafter, whenever those men have been setting up their camps, the horde is dashing into it to demand their drink.

The Super Baby

Jin, born to a peasant couple in Yunxian of China, weighed 6.75 kg. at birth. Within a month his weight doubled. Now about 3 years, he weighs over 40 kg. He eats a kilogram of staple food a day. He has no other abnormality except growing too fast like an infant giant.



An Interpreter in Pocket

A computer company of Japan has invented a pocket translator. The Japanese abroad will think his question in his own language, and will peck away at his key. The little machine will ask in English "What's the price of that, please?" It will appear as if the man himself was speaking. The machine knows 264 basic sentences, made up of 2,508 words.

Continuing our fairytale novella **THE LEGEND OF
THE GOLDEN VALLEY**

—By Manoj Das

(Story so far: In the Golden Valley an earthquake reveals a charming gold image. The young Raju who discovered it goes in quest of the secret that would breathe life into it. He leaves the image to the care of the king and enters a strange land where the people had everything except the capacity to smile — and yet another land where the people made bizarre use of the boons once bestowed on them by a hermit. What has happened in the Golden Valley in the meanwhile?)

8. A Wizard to the King's Aid

Although only a few days had passed since Raju disappeared behind the mysterious waterfall, the king began to show signs of impatience. He posted men on the hills and atop the kingdom's tallest trees so that he would be the first man to be informed when Raju had been spotted on the horizon.

Often he remembered the golden statue while he was midway eating his food. Needless to say it was the luddoo that reminded him of the statue. He would then rush to the hill. But once before the statue, he would remember his food and get upset not to find it before him. In view of this, arrangements were made for the thirty and odd half-eaten dishes to be transported by thirty and odd servants to the site whenever he would leave the dining table abruptly.

"How do I look?" he would

ask any of his courtiers any moment. The courtiers knew only too well how much pains he took to make himself charming. That was to deserve the hand of the beautiful maiden when she would come to life. He ate double, bathed in purified butter, and trimmed his sideburns and moustache every alternate day and the hair on the head every third day. There were now two rings on each of his fingers and several more chains around his neck.

"You look beautiful, Your Awful Majesty," said the courtiers readily. Soon they understood that such a stock answer ceased to please him sufficiently. They began using similes. "You look as charming as a flower" or "as a butterfly" or "as a rainbow", they said. Before long they ran out of similes. Two court-poets made good business by selling new similes

to the courtiers. And soon they began inventing words. The courtiers were happy to please the king. The king was pleased to hear that he was as charming as Puingle-duingle or Domangolomango. He did not care for their meaning as long as they sounded excellent.

"Only if she smiles once she will begin blinking and her heart would begin beating. And is there a nymph who had sight and heart yet who would not fall in love with our king as soon as she saw or smelled him?" observed the wise minister.

The king nodded. He had no reason to disbelieve his minister particularly when the old man

spoke sense like this. The question was how to make the statue smile once.

Well-known buffoons and clowns as well as those whom the king and his men thought to be buffoons were rounded up. The king's treasure was liberally spent to secure for them fancy dresses. They were made to show their antics before the statue. When they were tired, they were made to go on at sword-point till they collapsed.

The king had announced that whoever will first see the statue smile will be rewarded. Once at night, as the flickering light from the hundred torches showed





the golden statue in glittering flashes, one of the sentinels thought that he saw her smile! The king was informed forthwith. He came running there from his dinner, thirty odd servants following him with the thirty odd dishes. But he saw no smile however closely he looked at the statue.

"You will receive the reward all right," the king told the guard, "but you must lose your eyes. That is because the privilege of seeing her smile first ought to have been ours!"

Luckily for the man, before the king's decision had been put to work, a courtier announ-

ced the arrival of a great wizard.

"He can perform unimaginable miracles, my lord," said the courtier.

"Indeed, I can," agreed the wizard. He clapped his hands. An assistant of his came forward, dragging a bear along.

"What do you see, my lord?" asked the wizard.

"Taming a bear is hardly a miracle. Take it away. It stinks!" growled the king.

"Very well, my lord," said the wizard with a smile. "I'll not let it remain a bear for long, to spare you its stink.

The wizard kicked the bear. It fell down. The wizard's assistant covered the beast with a blanket.

The wizard circled round it, whipping it several times. The beast under the blanket seemed to be wriggling with pain. The wizard then recited some incantation in a weird voice and shouted out, "Boom!"

From under the blanket popped up a man—a complete man. The amazed king examined him. No, not even a patch of the bear—not even a centimetre of its tail—had been left in the man.

At that hour of the night there were not many people

around. The sentinels guarding the statue and the servants holding the dishes were not supposed to talk to the king.

Some ministers and courtiers, of course, had reached the scene. But needless to say, over the years they had adjusted their wisdom to that of their king. Like the king they believed that the wizard had whipped up a man out of a bear.

A few onlookers, who suspected that the wizard had only brought a man draped in a bear-skin and that the bear-skin remained hidden under the blanket, chose to keep quiet.

The newly made man growled and scratched the nose of a

minister who had brought it too close to him to see if he still stank like a bear.

"Never mind that, my lord. He will forget growling and learn talking soon and, by this time tomorrow, he will talk like a dozen ministers! And instead of using his nails, he will use daggers like we gentlemen," said the wizard.

The ministers looked at one another apprehensively.

"My lord, what do you think of a wizard who can change a bear into a man?" asked the wizard.

"I'll instantly tell you what I think," said the king smartly. "I think you can change ano-



ther bear into another man. But one is enough," he added after a deep thought.

"How wise! How wise!" the courtiers sang in unison.

"My lord, don't you think that the chap who did this can also change the statue into a living maiden?" asked the wizard with some impatience.

"Whopee!" exclaimed the king. "I want to leap up, but I can't!" he said with an emotion that betrayed a mixture of joy and anguish.

"It is your tummy that holds you down, my lord, but I assure you, much of the tummy would have vanished by the time she comes to life," said the wizard.

"Please, please, wizard dear, let us cover the statue with your magic blanket at once. Please whip her as hard as you wish to. She should get a lesson for keeping me waiting so long," said the king.

The wizard looked grave. "That won't do, my lord. What is to be followed is an entirely different process. You have to go without food for a week. Then, you have to meditate inside the cave behind the statue. Only that will yield the result," informed the wizard.

"Without food? For a whole week?" the king cried out in horror!

To continue





LEGENDS AND PARABLES OF INDIA

MIRACLE IN MUSIC

Three merchants of Varanasi were on a visit to a faraway town. After a day's business, in the evening, they felt a desire to enjoy some music.

"Have you got any good musician here?" they asked their host, a local trader.

"We have. He is young, but when he plays his veena the listeners forget everything else," claimed the trader.

The merchants were happy. They sent an invitation to the young man. He accepted it readily and came to entertain them. He was delighted to know that his fame had reached music-lovers of a distant city.

The young man played on.

The merchants, however, were found to be unmindful. They were busy talking among themselves.

The young man, after a while, stopped playing. "Don't you find my music interesting enough?" he asked.

The merchants looked a bit embarrassed. "Sorry, young man, we thought you were still tuning your instrument. Come on, we shall now listen very attentively," they promised.

The young man played for an hour and the merchants listened to him in silence, but he had a feeling that they were not much impressed.

When the merchants paid him



for his performance, he asked them if they had heard someone who played the instrument better than he did.

"Indeed, young man, a great veena-player, a wizard in the instrument, is our friend and neighbour. He is the chief musician in the court of the king of Varanasi," said the merchants.

The young man requested the merchants to take him along with them to Varanasi and to introduce him to the great musician.

The merchants obliged him. But the old musician, whom other musicians of Varanasi

called the guru, showed his unwillingness to give lessons to the young man. That was because the guru felt that though the young man was intelligent and studious, he was more eager for fame than for the art.

But the young man did not leave the guru's house. He shed tears and with folded hands appealed to the old man to accept him as his disciple.

At last the guru yielded. The young man showed great reverence to him and served him in many ways. He also learnt his lessons with great devotion. The guru was quite pleased with him.

Two years passed. The guru retired from his position in the king's court. The king asked the guru to recommend one of his disciples for the post.

The guru had a number of worthy disciples. But he had lately grown attached to the young man. The young man pleaded with him to be recommended to the king. He could not refuse.

The young man became the chief musician of the royal court. He stopped visiting the guru's house, even though the old man was ailing.

At the end of the month the

young man received his salary. It was a handsome amount, but he knew that the guru was paid much more.

"My lord, I occupy the same position that the old man occupied. Why should I get less?" he asked the king.

"Don't compare yourself with him. He is the greatest musician I have ever known," the king replied.

"I bet, my lord, that I am in no way less accomplished than him. You can call experts from other courts and try both of us," said the young man and he insisted on this.

At first the king thought that it would be unfair to ask the guru to join a contest with his disciple. But he was overpowered by his temptation to enjoy a grand musical treat.

The guru was shocked to hear that his disciple challenged his superiority. He felt humiliated and betrayed. He refused to sit for the contest.

But at night he had a different inspiration. The ungrateful and arrogant young man should not go without a final lesson. In the morning he sent word to the king that he had changed his mind and was willing to face the young man in a contest.



A day was fixed for the contest. The king invited well-known musicians, music-lovers and experts from his own kingdom as well as from the neighbouring kingdoms for the occasion.

The contest began. Both the guru and the disciple played their instruments charmingly well. The audience applauded. The disciple smiled and nodded acknowledging their appreciation. But the old guru looked at nobody. He was thoroughly absorbed in his music.

Suddenly one of the strings of the guru's veena got snapped. A smile of satisfaction played

on the young man's lips. But to everyone's surprise, the melody of the guru's music was not reduced by it. Soon another string gave away and then yet another. Even then he played on. Neither the volume nor the range of his music suffered in the least. In fact, the melody grew in its intensity. The old man sat playing, as though lost in a trance. It seemed the spirit of music was flowing through him while he was quite unmindful of his broken strings.

A spell was cast on the audience. Their eyes were glued to the guru. Nobody looked at the disciple.

The young man was bewildered at this unexpected turn of the situation. In his be-

wilderment he thought that he too would do well to snap his strings. He broke them one after another. Zarring notes came out of his veena. Many in the audience looked annoyed. The king gestured at him impatiently asking him to stop.

The young man stopped. The old guru still went on for a while—even though only one string was left in his veena. When he finished, the audience sat spell-bound for a few minutes and then they broke into a long applause. Many came rushing and bowed down to him, including the king.

Everybody forgot the disciple. When they remembered him, he was not to be seen. Shame had driven him out of Varanasi.

(Adapted from the Jatakas)



The Merchant and the Jinn

Long long ago there lived a merchant in a certain town. He was honest and he was prosperous.

One day, on his way to a distant city he sat down under a tree for rest. There were some date fruits in his bag. He ate them. As he did so, he hurled their stones in this direction or that.

Suddenly he heard a roaring sound. He saw a small coil of smoke before him. The smoke

grew dark. A fearful form began to emerge from it. As the merchant feared, soon there stood a jinn before him.

"I'll kill you!" the jinn roared forth.

"Why, good jinn, can't we be friends?" asked the merchant, gathering courage.

"You struck my infant son dead by your date-stone!" said the jinn.

"I'm awfully sorry, jinn, but I did not do such a thing kno-





wingly. You jinns generally remain invisible to human beings. I would have never aimed my stone at your son," explained the merchant.

"No excuse would satisfy me. I'll be satisfied only by killing you," said the jinn.

The merchant understood that the jinn was in no mood to listen to him. He said, "If you must kill me, then just allow me a few days to settle my things at home. I promise to return this day next week."

The jinn felt that the merchant did not mean to deceive him. He agreed to his proposal.

The merchant paid up his

loans, told his son how to take proper care of his business, and fixed his daughter's marriage. Then he took leave of his family and his relatives. In his town there was not a soul who did not weep for him.

Alone the merchant walked into the meadow and sat down under the tree waiting for the jinn. A moment later an old man who passed by, carrying a deer with him, saw him.

"Why do you look so sad?" asked the old man.

The merchant sighed and told him how he was waiting for his death.

"I do not know another man who, true to his word, would have come back to be killed by the jinn," observed the old man. He decided to wait there for the jinn's arrival.

Soon there reached another old man coming from another direction, two dogs following him. Sitting down for rest, he too heard the merchant's story and felt so deeply moved that he could not go away.

There was a roaring sound and, out of a puff of smoke that grew dark and dense, appeared the jinn.

"Come out and get killed," the jinn told the merchant.

"O good jinn, will you not spare the life of this truthful merchant?" said the first old man.

"Only if you knew what he has done to me!" retorted the jinn angrily.

"Good jinn, whatever the merchant did, he did unwittingly. But there are people who do wicked things in full awareness of the nature of their deeds. I have suffered such wickedness. Do you see this deer with me? Well, if I tell you the story behind it and if you find the story interesting enough, will you spare the merchant's life?" asked the first old man.

"I can spare half of his life,"

promised the jinn.

The old man told his story:-

I married for a second time as my first wife did not bear me any child. A son was born to my second wife—and a bonny boy it was.

I had to be away from my home for a full year when my son was in his teens. On my return I did not see him or his mother. My first wife, shedding tears, told me that my second wife had died and my son had left home without telling her where he was going.

I looked for my son here and there, but in vain. However hard I tried to forget my anxiety, I could not. Days passed.





Came the new year day. My wife said that we should have a feast. She showed me a cow and proposed that it be killed. I had no objection to it. But the cow gave out such heart-rending lows that I told my servant not to kill it. But my wife insisted that it be killed. So it was. But something in my mind forbade me to eat its flesh. I gave it away to my neighbours.

The cow had left a handsome and healthy calf behind. My wife now proposed that it be killed. But when it was being dragged out of the cowshed, it broke away from the servant's

hold and, coming to me, nudged me affectionately with its tender head and licked my hand.

"I cannot stand the sight of it being killed. Lead it away to your home and kill it there," I told my servant.

In the evening the servant met me. He was excited. He requested me to follow him which I did.

The calf was inside his room. His daughter was fondling it.

"Who do you think this calf is?" asked my servant.

I was intrigued by his question. He explained, "Sir, this is none but your lost son! Your first wife, this boy's step-mother, did this to your boy when you were away, thanks to her knowledge of black magic. It has so happened that my daughter knows the same science. She could recognise your son in this!"

I stood stunned. Surprise and joy kept me speechless for a long time. "My child, can you change this calf into my son? If you can, I'll make you his wife!"

"I can. I should also be happy to marry your son. But you must allow me to change your first wife into an animal. If I don't, she will do even greater mischief to me!" said the girl.

I agreed to the condition. She brought a little water and, muttering a certain magic formula, sprinkled it on the calf. Lo and behold, the calf changed into my son.

I embraced him and wept with joy. "Where is your mother?" I asked him. My son broke down. "O father! Who do you think was killed while you looked on yourself? That cow was my mother!" he said.

You can imagine my agony. However, I controlled myself and got the girl married to my son. Then I led them home. At the sight of my son my first wife shrieked. Instantly my daughter-in-law cast her charm on her

and she was reduced to this deer.

Years have passed. Although this woman has caused me great pain, I still have compassion for her and I let her accompany me wherever I go.

When the old man finished his story, the jinn said, "Your story is very interesting. Your compassion is exemplary. As promised, I spare half of the life of the merchant."

Said the second old man, "O jinn, will you spare the other half of the merchant's life if you find my story interesting enough?"

"I will," said the jinn.

To conclude in the next issue





Each according to his Nature

One day two young men met a zamindar. Both were educated. They had come with a letter of recommendation from a friend of the zamindar. They wanted employment.

"There is no vacancy in my kachahri at the moment. But I cannot turn down your request since you have brought a recommendation from a dear friend," said the zamindar and, after a moment's pause, added, "I better give you an acre of land and some money each. Do whatever you like with the land. I'd like you to return my money after a year. The land will be yours."

The two young men agreed to the proposal. They promised to make the best use of the opportunity given to them.

The first young man went with the money to the land allotted to him. That was at a far-off place. He found that the land had been lying idle for many years. Big trees had grown on it.

He understood that the money he had would be entirely spent only in reclaiming the land. Where to get money for cultivating any crop and also to maintain himself?

He examined the clay and realised that it would make bricks of good quality. He made a brickyard there and used the wood from the trees as fuel.

When the bricks were ready, he carried them to the town and sold them at a good price.

At the end of the year he met the zamindar and repaid his

loan.

"How did you earn this amount?" asked the zamindar.

"From the earth, sir, from the bare earth, not through any crop," he replied and he gave an account of his enterprise.

"Good. Take the money back. Let that help you further in your business. Your success is reward enough for me," said the landlord.

The other young man had been given an acre of land situated in another direction. A few days later he met the landlord and said, "Sir, thanks for sending me to that land. It was a wonderful place. The sweet river flowed by its side. At the sunset the hill radiated a golden hue."

"What have you produced?" asked the zamindar.

"A dozen of poems, Sir," he

showed them to the zamindar. The zamindar read them.

"What about returning my money?"

The young man looked pale at the question. "Sir," he said, "my first effort at cultivating the land failed because the seeds were bad. The second crop was eaten away by stray cattle.. "

"While you sat writing poetry!" cut in the zamindar.

The young man hung his head. "I'll return your money after a year. I'm going in search of a job," he said apologetically.

"You need not go anywhere, nor need you repay the money. I understand your nature. Be here as a tutor to my little son and write as much poetry as you can. Each one ought to be provided according to his nature," said the landlord with a pat on the poet's back.



Escape with an Engine

Risk was great; but their cause was greater!

The year was 1862. There was excitement all over America. The Civil War between the Northern states and the Southern states was at its height. The Northern states stood for the abolition of slavery. Eleven Southern states were in favour of retaining the unfortunate system. The latter wanted to break away from the other states and become known as the Southern Confederacy.

President Abraham Lincoln stood for abolition of slavery. He desired that Eastern Tennessee which had become the stronghold of the Southerners or the Confederates should be won over. The Confederates were then collecting arms and food and other materials at a town called Chattanooga.

The generals of the Northern side were anxious to disrupt the movement of these materials to Chattanooga. The railway was the means through which the enemy was growing stronger. The first railway had been laid

in America in 1832. It had never been used to anybody's advantage so much as it was by the Confederates during the war.

The railway crossed two rivers and reached Chattanooga. General Mitchel of the Northern side prepared to march into Chattanooga from the opposite direction. It would be excellent if the railway bridges could be destroyed, cutting Chattanooga's link with the interior of Tennessee.

But how can that be done? Who can destroy the bridge entering the very heart of the enemy-land?

There was a daring young man named James Andrews who was ready to take any risk for the sake of his cause. Sanctioned by General Mitchel, he selected twentyfour soldiers. The soldiers shed their uniform and dressed up like ordinary workmen. The mission was top-secret. They were not told what it was. They were directed to meet Andrews at Marietta on

the third day.

Through bad weather they walked towards the appointed place. Two were captured by the enemy. Two more lost their way. The rest met Andrews a day late.

Only then Andrews disclosed to them what his plan was. They must capture an engine and drive it towards Chattanooga, setting the bridges on fire after crossing them.

The plan seemed fantastic. First, to steal an engine was not going to be easy. Then it would be childish to imagine that the enemy would not pursue them and let them go on burning the bridges!

Indeed, the risk was great. But their cause was greater. For the sake of the cause and for the sake of President Lincoln they must work out their plan. This is how Andrews inspired his men.

They boarded a train—in different compartments—buying tickets for different stations. After fourteen kilometres came a station called Big Shanty. A regiment of the Confederate army camped there. As the train stopped, the driver, his assistants, and most of the passengers got off for a while—for



breakfast and for a stroll.

It was a foggy morning. The adventurers got down and quietly started their work. That was to disengage the engine of the train, along with three empty vans.

They carried on the work smoothly while their enemy soldiers looked on from their camp. They thought it to be some routine job carried out by the railway technicians.

The driver was still in the food stall when the engine and the three vans, captured by the adventurers, started moving forward. Nobody suspected anything amiss until it had gathered



full speed and had gone quite far.

Andrews stopped the engine for a moment to snap the telegraph wires. Then it resumed its journey.

Andrews had drawn his plan perfectly well. He knew when there will be trains from the other direction. He knew at which stations he can cross them. What he did not know was that because of the war the normal time-table had been suspended. Extra trains with military errands were running at short intervals.

Soon they were confronted by one such extra train. The dri-

ver of the train was surprised to see the engine with unfamiliar men. "We are carrying gunpowder urgently needed by General Beauregard. Back out and give us way!" Andrews informed the driver in a stern voice. General Beauregard was an important commander of the Confederate side.

That worked. The driver backed out diverting his train to a side way at a small station, letting Andrews proceed.

But Andrews had to stop almost after every station to snap the telegraph wires. That delayed him. The first bridge was still miles away.

One can imagine what might have happened at Big Shanty in the meanwhile. The driver and his assistants, after a hearty breakfast, came to board an engine that seemed to have clean disappeared! Some of the passengers found their compartments gone!

They tried to contact the next station, but the telegraph system had grown defunct.

Two railway officials started running. At the next station they found an old locomotive belonging to an iron company ready with steam up. They jumped into it and pursued the

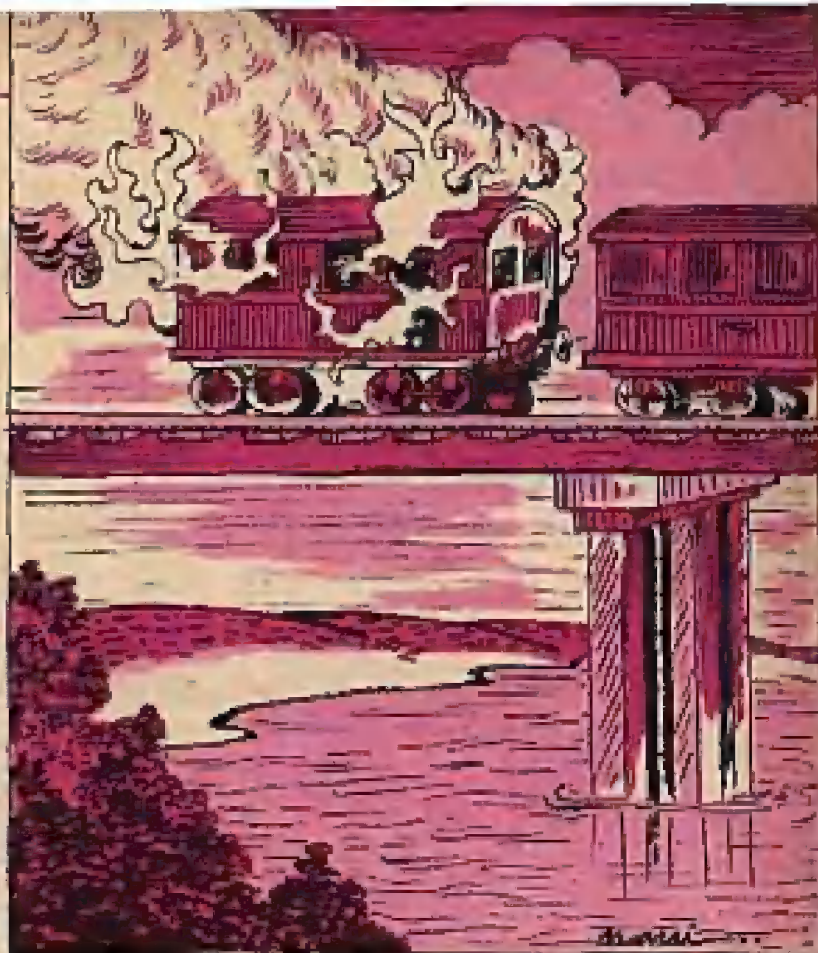
adventurers. On their way, at another station, they added a van to it loaded with some well armed Confederate soldiers.

Soon the adventurers heard the whistle behind them. They stopped and tried to block the line with boulders. The smoke from the pursuing train could now be seen. The adventurers drove away.

The boulders could not stop the pursuing train. It swept them off the line and roared forth. Andrews disengaged one of his three vans and steamed on leaving it behind. He had thought that the van would be an obstacle to the pursuers. But it was not. The furiously steaming engine pushed it forward till it too was thrown off the rails.

Andrews drove his engine at the maximum speed. The engine required water and rest. It was denied both. They must reach the bridge and destroy it before the enemy had caught up with them!

The bridge was not far; but the pursuing train too was not far. Andrews stopped and disengaged one more van. Then he loaded the remaining van with dry wood and grass. His men did their best to bend the



rails behind them.

The pursuers were close by. The adventurers, while collecting the wood, came within the enemy's shooting range. They narrowly escaped their bullets and resumed driving. The van left behind checked the speed of the pursuing train for a moment. The bent rails gave the pursuers severe jolts. But they too were daring. They did not give up.

Andrews reached the bridge. Midway the bridge he disengaged the last van with the combustible stuff in it. He then put fire to it.

The van began to burn. Andrews expected the bridge to

catch fire and collapse. That is what would have happened normally. But unfortunately for his party and fortunately for his pursuers, a thin shower came down. The fire could not grow strong. The smoke, mixed with fog, did not let the pursuers see what was really happening. Their train dashed into it, pushed the burning van ahead, and gathered speed with a vengeance.

The engine captured by Andrews was running out of fuel. They understood that their mission had failed.

"Let the engine move forward. Jump off, not together, but one by one, and try to es-

cape. Thanks and best wishes," said Andrews.

His men obeyed him. They leaped from the running train and disappeared in the dusk.

When the engine ultimately stopped, the pursuers found no man in it. But a thorough search for them began and most of them—including Andrews—were arrested within a week. Seven of them, beginning with Andrews, were court-martialled and shot dead. Others were lucky. Eight escaped to the North. The rest who were prisoners were set free as the Northern army invaded Chattanooga and won a victory.



The Ganesh Chaturthi

A son had been born to Shiva and Parvati. As the news spread, gods and goddesses came rushing to have a glimpse of the divine child.

Parvati observed that while all the guests gazed at the child and showed their delight, one god stood with his head hung. He was Shani.

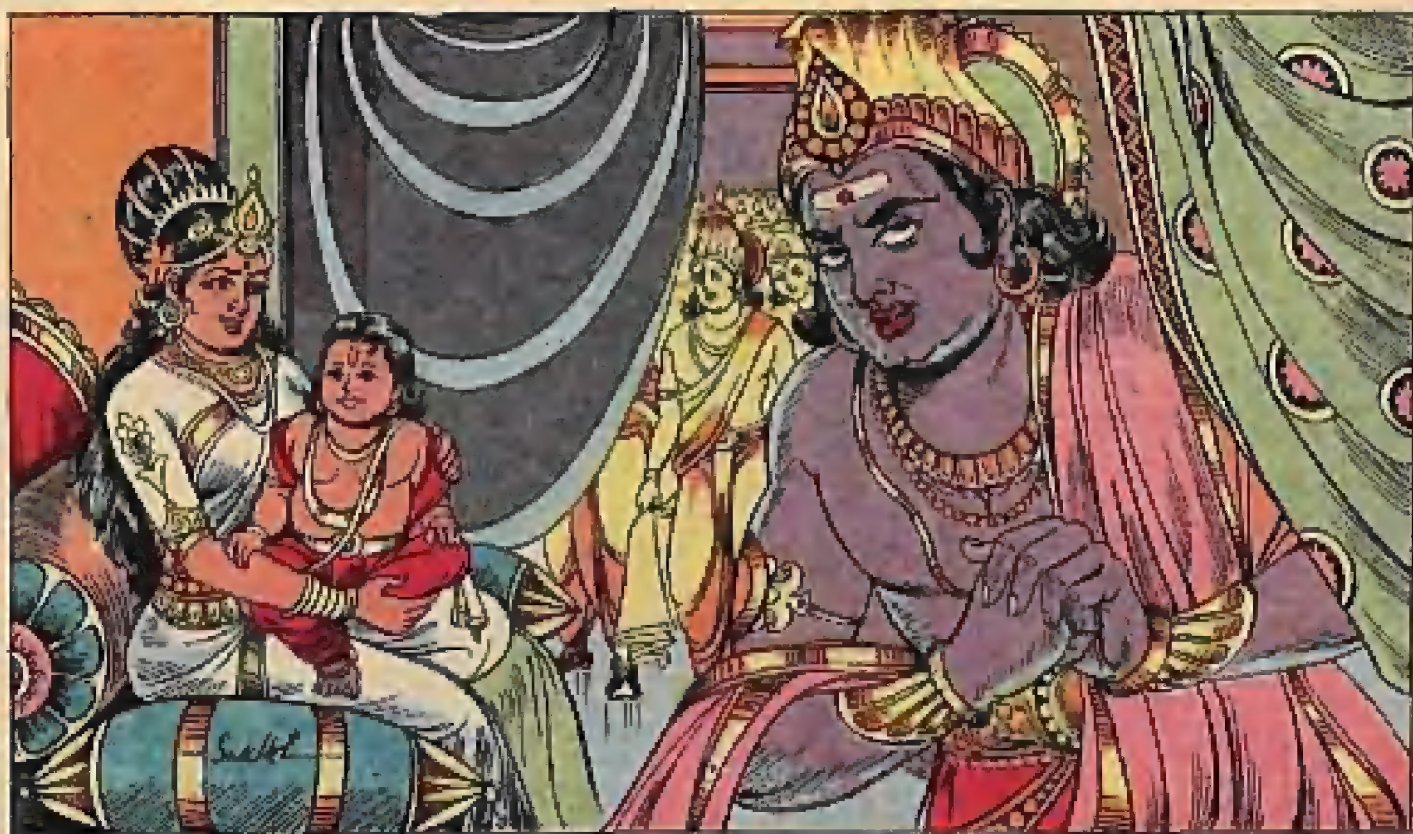
"Won't you have a look at my son?" asked Mother Parvati.

Shani was embarrassed. He had come there in the company

of the other gods with all enthusiasm, but then he remembered that he ought not to look at the child. Lately he was under a curse. One at whom he would look was likely to lose his head.

But Mother Parvati, in her eagerness to show her charming child to this guest, asked him again and again to look at it. Shani at last cast a look—and gone was the child's head!

Whoever had foreseen such a



calamity! Some of the gods ran to Vishnu with this unfortunate news. Vishnu instantly sent his weapon, the *Sudarsana Chakra*, to do the needful. It collected an elephant's head and fixed it to the child.

There is a different and popular version of the unusual form of Ganesh. Once when Lord Shiva was out of Kailash, Parvati made a small doll out of the dust collected on her body and breathed life into it. It became a lovely child. Parvati asked his young boy to guard her home while she took bath.

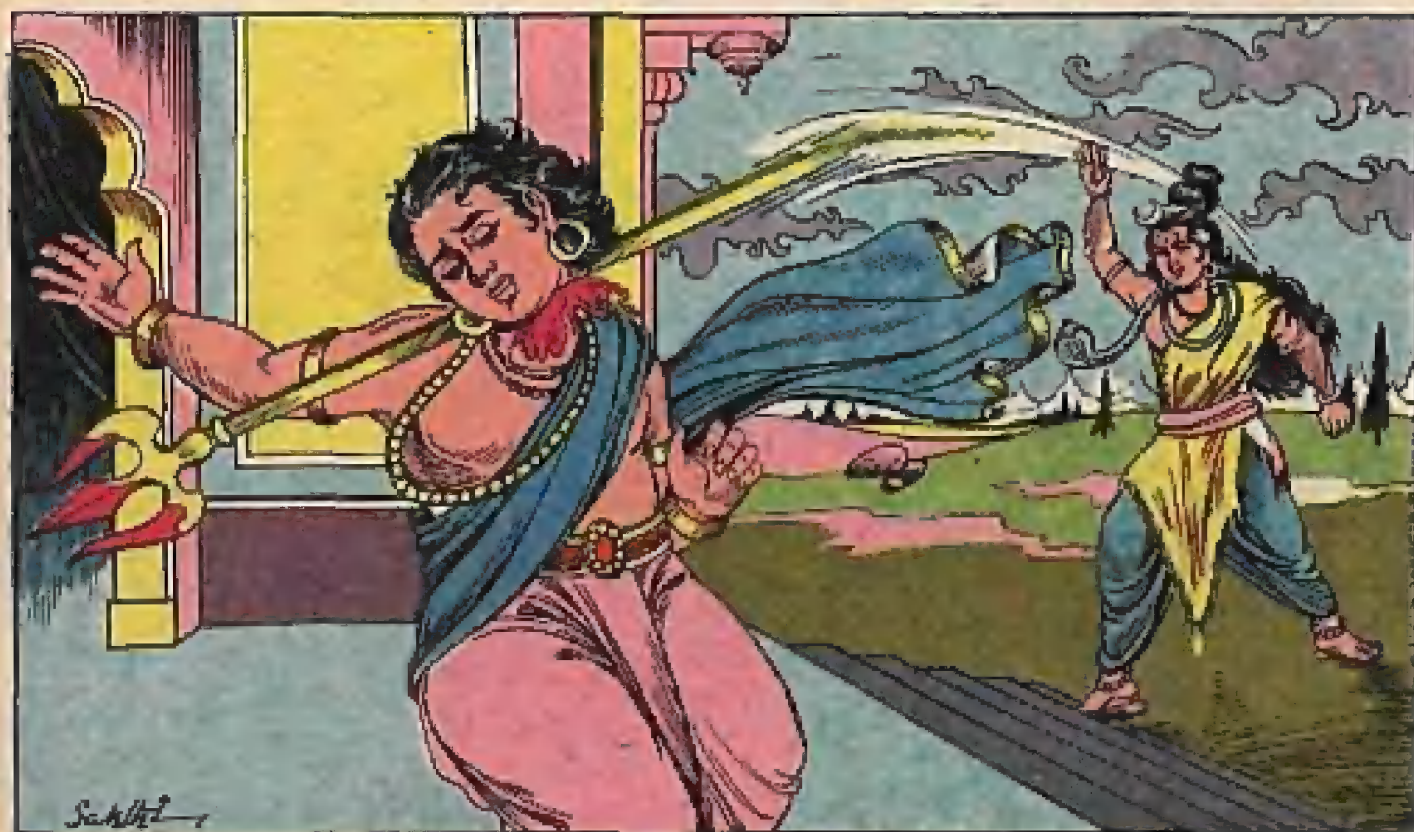
It is then that Lord Shiva returned. The boy who did not know him refused to allow him

entry into his abode. Shiva, at first amused, by and by got annoyed with the impudence of the boy. The boy lost his head and an elephant's head had to be secured for him.

"Although this god-child looks so unusual, nobody can excel him in wisdom and the power to remove all that hinders an auspicious work," declared Vishnu.

"In that case this new-born god ought to be invoked at the beginning of every good work. He should be worshipped first whenever any of us is to be worshipped," said the gods.

Then it became a sacred law to invoke Ganesh—the son of



Shiva and Parvati—at the start of anything good or holy. He was called *Vighneswara*—the Master over obstacles; one who can check them.

And, with an elephant's head, does not Ganesh look beautiful? He does—for all those who have the right vision.

Ganesh once got angry with the moon because the latter laughed when he fell off his vehicle—the mouse. Ganesh cursed him saying that whoever will look at him will be laughed at. Later he reconsidered his utterance. The effect of the curse would be limited only to his birthday—he said. Hence

people avoid looking at the moon on Ganesh's birthday.

The fourth day of the lunar fortnight of the month of *Bhadra* is the day for the annual worship of this lovely god for it was on that day that he was born. The day is celebrated all over India. In Maharashtra—in and around the city of Bombay in particular—the day is celebrated with great enthusiasm. Images of Ganesh, of various sizes, some of them eight-metre-high, are taken out in mammoth processions, lively with music, and are immersed in the sea or lakes.

The Ganesh Chaturthi falls on the 2nd of September this year.



THE LANDLORD'S KINDNESS

Raghunath, the trader in donkeys, camped at Gulpur. He kept the animals under a shade. As he feared thieves, he spent his night in the open shade guarding the donkeys.

One day Sursen, the landlord, met Raghunath and said, "I feel sorry to learn that you are passing sleepless nights. Better occupy my small house lying deserted in front of Bhajanlal's building. You won't have to pay any rent."

Raghunath accepted the offer gratefully. He led his donkeys to the deserted house. It was a very old house, but well-protected with walls.

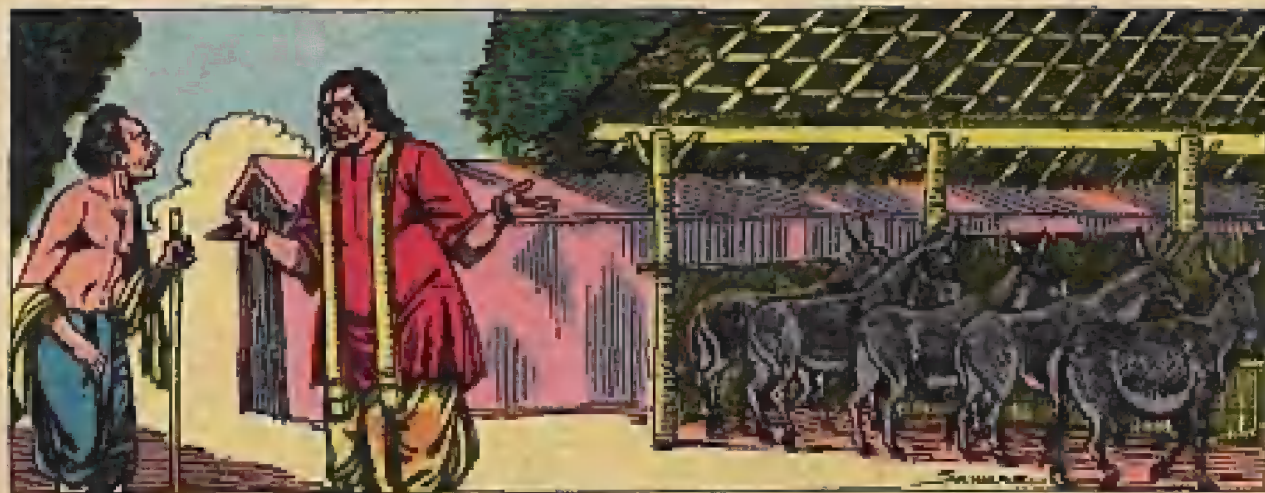
The donkeys were in the habit of neighing at night. Bhajanlal's sleep was disturbed. He requested Raghunath to shift his donkeys elsewhere, but Raghunath did not oblige him.

One night it rained heavily. The old house collapsed. Raghunath's donkeys died. Raghunath was extremely sad.

The landlord sent for him. When he came, the landlord gave him five hundred rupees and said, "I am reconstructing the house. It should be ready by evening. Buy donkeys immediately. I do not want Bhajanlal to steal a good sleep tonight!"

Only then Raghunath fully realised the cause of the landlord's kindness. The landlord used him to disturb Bhajanlal's sleep.

Raghunath took the money, but he left the village and started business elsewhere.





STORY OF INDIA-57

A KING BECOMES AN ASCETIC

Legend says that Bhartrihari was a king who ruled from Ujjain. Although he loved luxury he was a just and kind ruler. Probably he lived in the 7th century.

In a forest, not far from the city, lived a hermit. One day he saw a strange fruit hanging before him. He understood that the fruit was born of the power of his own meditation.



The fruit had the rare virtue of keeping one who ate it youthful and handsome for a hundred years. The hermit thought that King Bhartrihari deserved it. He presented it to him.



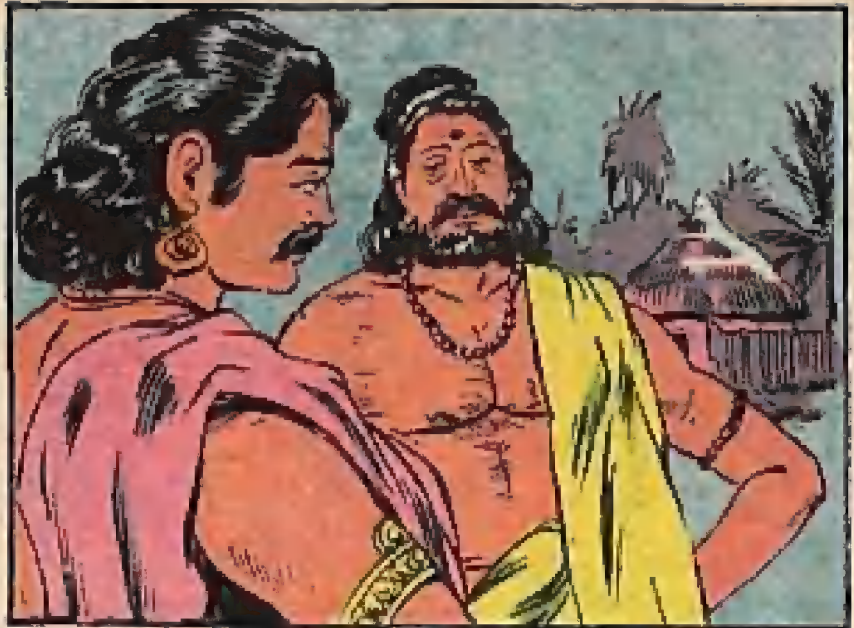
The king loved his youngest queen more than himself. He forthwith carried the fruit to the inner apartment of his palace and made a present of it to her.

Next day the king went out for hunting. On his way back home, a veiled woman stopped him and requested him to follow her to a lonely place.



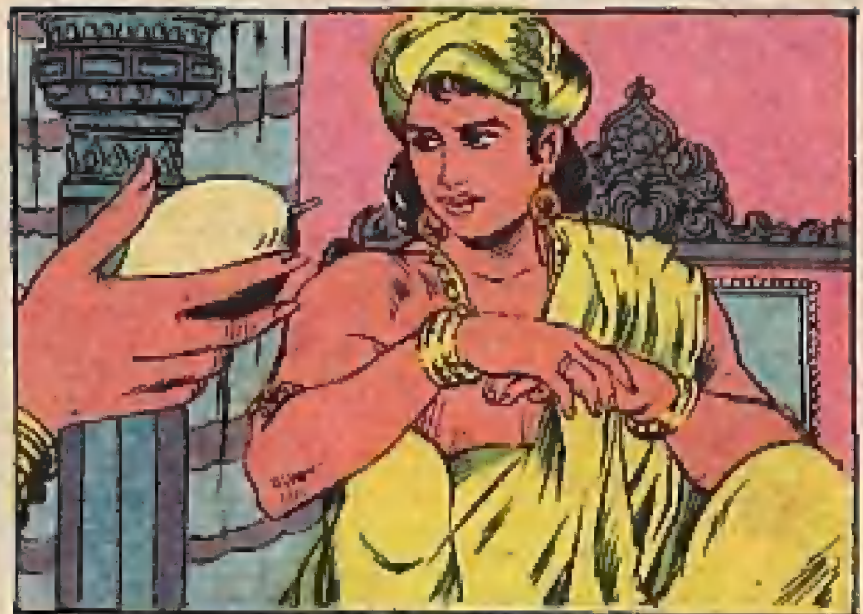
The king soon recognized her—the most charming danseuse. Giving a fruit to the king, she said, "This will ensure you youth for a hundred years. You deserve it, not I." She hurriedly left.

The king sent his companions away and rode into the forest and enquired of the hermit if he had given a second fruit to the danseuse. The hermit said that there had not been a second fruit.



The king's astonishment knew no bound. He sat down on a rock and thought what could be the mystery of the strange fruit reaching the danseuse. He decided to make a careful investigation.

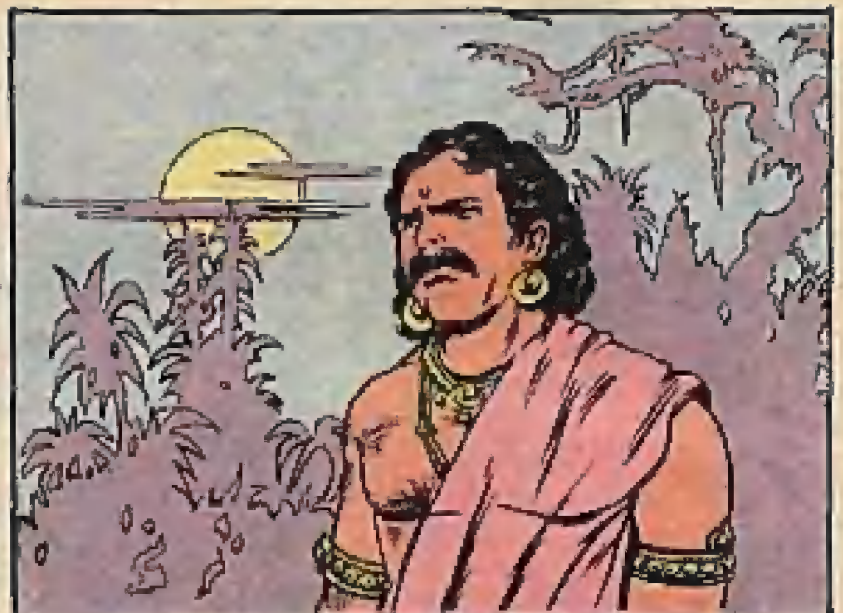
Slowly the mystery got unravelled. The youngest queen had great love for a certain nobleman. She had secretly handed over the fruit to him, soon after she had got it.



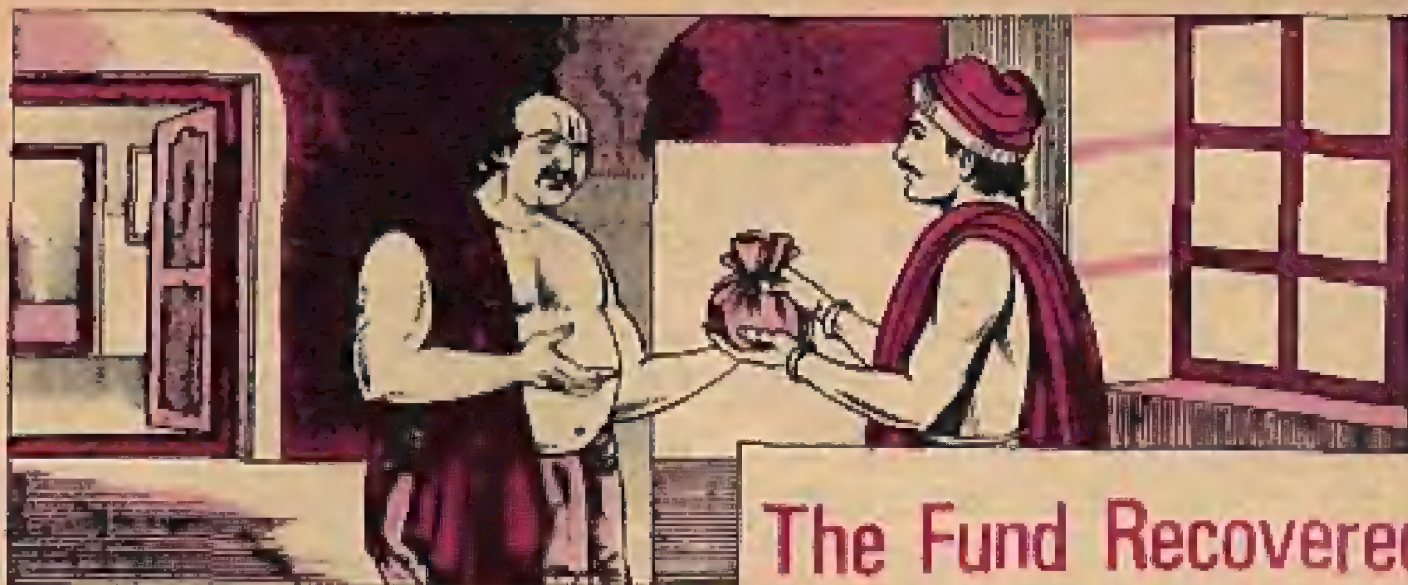


The nobleman, instead of eating the fruit, had carried it to the danseuse in the evening. He used to love the danseuse very much and had given the fruit to her.

It took some time for the king to get over his shock. Then, one night, he quietly left his palace—his beautiful city—and entered the forest and lived as a hermit.



This king turned ascetic wrote some books among which one is the *Vairagya-satakam*—a hundred verses that help people get disillusioned with the false values in life.



The Fund Recovered

Villagers of Shyampur celebrated Janmashtami in a festive way. Every year they raised a fund for the purpose, sufficiently ahead of time.

Last year they raised a thousand rupees and kept the amount with Haridas, a member of the celebration committee. Haridas was poor, but he was trusted by all.

Lal Pandey was the richest man in the village. He too was a member of the committee. He felt hurt because the committee entrusted the fund to Haridas and not to him.

Haridas understood his mind. He carried the money to Lal Pandey in the evening and said, "Let this remain with you. I'll collect it when the need arises."

"All right. You can take it back whenever you like," said Pandey as he received the bag.

Not that Lal Pandey had a desire to harass Haridas. But something unexpected happened. Lal Pandey's son, Batu, had been a spoilt child. He saw the transaction through the window of his room and observed where his father kept the bag. At night he stole it and hid it.

A week passed. It was time to buy the things necessary for the festival. The committee asked Haridas to bring the money.

Haridas hurried to Lal Pandey and asked for the bag. Only then Pandey realised that the bag had been stolen.

It was not difficult for Pandey to understand who had stolen it. He could have easily given a thousand rupees himself. But he had a brainwave: Nobody had seen Haridas handing over

the bag to him. Why should he admit to having received it at all?

"Haridas, I'm afraid, you've bungled up things in your memory. You might have left that bag elsewhere!" he told Haridas.

Poor Haridas felt dizzy. He reported the matter to the committee. The committee never thought very high of Pandey. But it was difficult for the members to think that he would prove such a downright cheat.

"Well, what can we do? It is your responsibility to return us the money!" they said wryly.

"Right, friends, give me two

days. I'll sell a piece of my land and get the money," said Haridas with a sigh.

The villagers felt sad on account of him.

There was a hullabaloo at midnight. Haridas, like many others, was attracted by the noise and came out to the street.

Two sepoy's were seen holding Lal Pandey in their grip. They claimed that he ran when he saw them. Suspecting him to be a thief, they gave him a chase and caught him.

What surprised the villagers was the bag that the sepoy's had recovered from Pandey. The villagers recognized the bag—





the very bag they had deposited with Haridas. They counted and found that it had the exact amount in it!

Soon the facts came to light. Lal Pandey's son, Batu, had carried the bag to his gambling den. He was defeated in a game of gambling. The bag changed hands. The two gamblers who won it soon went for a drink at the tavern. When one got drunk, the other one picked up the bag and ran away from him. He felt nervous at the sight of the sepoy and gathered speed. When he was

about to be caught, he threw the bag on the verandah of a house and hid in a pit.

That happened to be the verandah of Lal Pandey's house. Upon hearing the thud, he came out. He had just lifted up the bag when the sepoy caught him. They thought that he was the fellow whom they had given the chase.

The villagers were happy that Haridas was not required to sell his land. The committee apologised to him as it had not been as sympathetic to him as it ought to have been!

Deciding to banish the naughty tabby cat
The young Ramu carried her, rolled in a mat
Eight miles afar
He released her,
But forgot his way and was led home by the cat.



*New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire*

AT THE LAST MOMENT

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Flashes of lightning revealed fearful faces. The moaning of jackals was interrupted by eerie laughter from the unearthly creatures.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. Then, as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying astride on his shoulder, the Vampire that possessed the corpse, said: "O king, it is strange that you have not yet changed your decision to pursue this mission. There are instances of people changing their decisions at the last moment. Let me cite an example. Listen with attention. That might bring you some relief."

The vampire went on: The young Vasant was intelligent and conscientious. He had got a lucrative job in the town.

Vasant was on a visit to his village. His parents desired him to marry Mamta, a girl of

the same village. She was a highly gifted girl, not so beautiful though.

Vasant dragged his feet on the proposal. He neither refused it nor gave his consent to it.

It was late in the afternoon. Vasant was enjoying a stroll in the grove outside the village. Rain came down all on a sudden. Vasant saw a newly built house on the other side of the grove. He ran towards it and got into its verandah.

"Come in, my child, why do you let yourself be lashed by the wind?" said an elderly woman, opening the door.

Vasant stepped in and saw the house decently decorated.

"Sandhya! Will you bring a towel?" called out the woman.

The girl who brought the towel did not come into the outer room. She handed it over to the elderly woman at the inner door. Vasant stole a glimpse of her profile. She was charming.

"Sandhya, bring a glass of hot milk for my son!" instructed the woman. Sandhya brought the milk, but again retreated from the door.

Through his conversation with the woman Vasant understood that they came of an aristocratic family, but had run into



bad days. Selling away their property elsewhere, they had come to live a simple life here. The woman had lost her husband; Sandhya was her only child.

Vasant came there again the next evening. He found the woman straining her eyes in making embroidery on a screen. "My daughter does not like plain screens," she said.

"Where is she?" asked Vasant.

"Doing her hair, I think," replied the woman.

Vasant thought that Sandhya must be a girl of good taste to like screens with designs. He felt quite attracted towards her.



Vasant appeared there again the next evening. The door was shut. Sweet music was coming from inside. Vasant understood that Sandhya was singing. He stood charmed, listening to the song.

"Why are you waiting outside, my boy?" Sandhya's mother asked him affectionately. She was returning home from the village shop.

Vasant greeted her and said that he was just having a stroll. Back at home, Vasant decided to propose to marry Sandhya.

Next day he reached Sandhya's house, resolved to put forth his proposal. But before

he had got onto the Verandah, a wild bull, furious at something else, threw him flat on the ground and ran away. Vasant got up and found that the bull's horn had left a cut on his right arm. Blood streamed out of the wound.

Vasant saw Sandhya witnessing the scene through her window.

Vasant kept standing, not sure whether to go back or to wait there. A minute passed. Sandhya's mother came from the other side and asked him with anxiety, "How did you get this wound?"

"A wild bull did it, auntie, while I was coming to say something to you," replied Vasant.

She led Vasant in. "Sandhya! will you bring some water?" she called out. The beautiful Sandhya came with the water at a slow pace. She seemed very particular about her gait.

Vasant's wound was not deep. The bleeding stopped. After dressing the wound, Sandhya's mother asked him, "What did you wish to say to me?"

"My marriage is going to take place shortly, with a girl named Mamta. My request is, you and

your daughter must visit our house on that occasion," said Vasant. He then thanked the woman and went home.

The vampire paused and then resumed in a challenging tone: "O King, Vasant had come to propose his marriage with Sandhya. How is it that he declared his decision to marry Mamta? Did he change his decision because he considered an attack by the bull a bad omen? Speak out if you can. Should you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answer, your head would roll off your shoulder.

Answered King Vikram forthwith: "It is the bull that upset Vasant's decision. He had been charmed by Sandhya's beauty and her supposed taste. But to his surprise he saw her unmoved by the accident that befell him. Normally a girl would feel anxious to help someone, however indirectly known to her, falling into such a situation. But Sandhya appeared indifferent. Even when she came with water, she came slowly, more conscious of her gait than the urgency of the situation. That showed that she lacked the feminine or motherly quality that was so



prominent in her mother.

"The other day Vasant had seen her mother straining her eyes for satisfying her daughter's taste while the daughter herself was busy doing her hair. It had not appeared to Vasant as anything amiss then. But a change of attitude now must have told him that the girl was rather vain. She ought to have made the designs herself instead of ordering her mother to do it. Hence he changed his decision then and there."

No sooner had King Vikram finished his reply than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.

THE IDLER'S ASTROLOGY

Hargovind did everything a day late. "One must think twice before doing anything," was his excuse for his laziness.

They had received a proposal for their daughter's marriage. "You must go and meet the bridegroom's father tomorrow," said his wife.

Hargovind yawned. He let two days pass under the pretext of bad weather. Then he consulted the almanac and found that an auspicious time was to come five days later. "The wise always follow astrology," he said and waited for the auspicious hour.

Finally he went out, but only to be back in two hours.

"Is it not half a day's way?" asked his surprised wife.

"Yes, but I came to know that the bridegroom got married yesterday."

"What was then the use of your waiting for the auspicious moment to go out of home?" asked his wife with a sigh.

"The cart I was travelling by got upturned. All the other passengers were injured. But look at me. Do you see a scratch?" answered Hargovind.





Trial at Midnight

Long long ago King Dharmapal ruled over Dhavalgiri. He was famous for his justice. He never hesitated to punish the guilty even if the latter happened to be very close to him.

According to the law of the time one was entitled to do to another what the latter had done to the former. If A gave a blow to B, it was within B's right to return the blow to A.

It was morning. The king was in his court. Among those present were the crown-prince, the minister, and a number of noble-men.

Suddenly a cobra was seen crawling across the court. There was a hullabaloo. The courtiers got scared at the sight of that dangerous creature. The king's bodyguards rushed forward to kill the snake. However, it was the crown-prince who unshea-

thed his sword promptly and cut it into two.

The top portion of the snake remained alive for a while. It managed to enter its hole in the orchard. His wife was horrified to see his condition. They were a kind of cobras who could talk.

"I'll bite the crown-prince dead!" said the she-cobra.

"Don't do anything in a haste. Appeal to the king for justice. You ought to be bound by the law of the land," said the cobra. Then he died.

The she-cobra crept into the palace at midnight. She found out the prince's bedroom soon. She climbed onto his bed and coiled round his neck as slowly as she could. After she had done so, she made her grip a little tight.

The prince woke up. He cried



out realising what the snake had done to him.

The palace-guards rushed into his room. They could not decide what to do. Should they try to kill the snake, it might bite the prince or their effort might wound the prince.

"Listen, you guards, I am not going to bite the prince immediately, unless you try to harm me. Call the king," said the she-cobra.

The king came soon. But he stood speechless.

"I am the wife of the cobra that was killed in the court today. Well, you are yourself the witness to the fact that my

husband had done no harm to anyone. He had strayed into the court and was coming out. But the prince killed the innocent creature and made me a widow. Now, I must kill the prince and make his wife a widow. Surely, the position I have taken is not unjustified!" said the she-cobra.

The king had no argument against the she-cobra's claim to her right. At the same time he knew how painful it would be for him to lose his son. He stood speechless.

In the meanwhile the minister had been informed of the happenings in the palace. He sent the news to the two judges of the kingdom. They and many others came rushing to the palace.

In order not to annoy the snake, only the judges joined the king in the prince's bedroom. One of them told the snake, "The cobra who was harmed by the prince could alone be given the right to harm the prince. You ought not to harm him!"

Replied the she-cobra with contempt: "How can a learned man speak such nonsense? The cobra is dead. How can he avenge the wrong done to him?"

I, his wife, am the one to suffer for his death. Hence I have the right to make the prince's wife suffer!"

The second judge said, "Right! we cannot really dispute the she-cobra's claim. The prince's wife must suffer the same degree of anguish which she is suffering. Well, she-cobra, how many children do you have?"

"I have five children. They are now father-less," said the she-cobra weeping.

"I see. You ought to make the prince's wife suffer along with her five children," observed the judge. He then added.

"True, the prince's wife would

become a widow if you kill the prince now; but her children will not become fatherless, for she has none. Should you not wait till she has become the mother of five?" asked he.

The she-cobra gave a thought to the argument and found it quite sensible. She agreed to wait.

"My lord, do not forget to inform me when your daughter-in-law has become a mother of five," said the cobra and she retired to her dwelling in the royal orchard adjacent to the palace.

The king heaved a sigh of relief.





The prince's wife gave birth to a daughter and then to a son. Whenever they were out in the orchard, the she-cobra saw them and happily waited

for the day when she would see the couple with five children.

But years passed and there was no change in the situation. The she-cobra died of old age.

SPOT THE TEN DIFFERENCES



JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS (II)

Famine struck many countries. Only in Egypt there was a bumper stock of food, as Joseph had foretold of the calamity.



In canaan the old Jacob asked his sons to go to Egypt and buy food. His youngest son, Benjamin, remained with him.

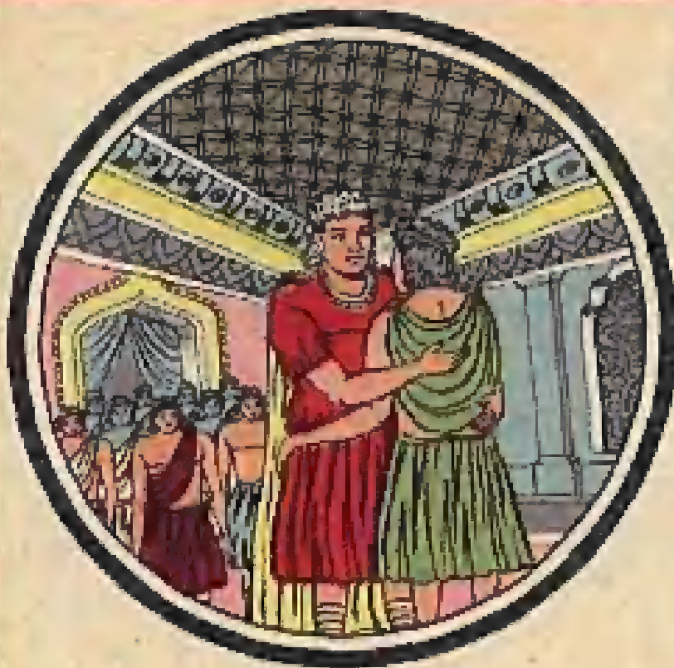


The king of Egypt had made Joseph the Governor. Joseph managed the distribution of food extremely well.



Joseph's brothers met him, but could not recognise him. He asked them to go back and bring their youngest brother along.





The brothers returned with Benjamin. Joseph embraced him. Even so they could not recognise Joseph.

Joseph invited his brothers to dinner. There he revealed who he was. His brothers sat speechless. But he had forgiven them.



Soon the old Jacob too came to meet his lost son. Joseph presented him to the king. The family lived in Egypt happily.



Jacob died at the age of 140. On his death-bed he prophesied that one day their descendants shall leave Egypt.





Dharmu was one of those who took shape out of Brahma's desire. He married the four daughters of Daksha Prajapati and they gave birth to four sons: Hari, Krishna, Nara, and Narayana. The two elder sons went out as ascetics quite early.

Nara and Narayana too took to the path of their brothers soon. In the Himalaya, beside the river Mandakini, they sat absorbed in meditation for a long time.

Such was the power they radiated that nobody was able to enter the region where they sat. They continued in their meditation, silent and unmoved.

Hermits and nymphs who saw them in that condition spoke

about them here and there. Their fame spread. Indra, the king of the gods, heard about them. It was in his nature to grow jealous of anyone who practised askesis in a remarkable way. He was afraid lest the new yogi would usurp his Indrahood.

Indra, in a bid to stop them from their endeavour, proceeded and, appearing before them, said, "O yogi brothers, wake up from your meditation. Here am I, Indra. Ask me for a boon and it shall be granted."

But Nara and Narayana remained lost in trance. Indra repeated his offer, but in vain. That angered him. He took to wizardry. At once lions, tigers



and elephants surrounded the place and roared and trumpeted to terrify the yogis. Next, bright flames surrounded the place. Thereafter cyclone created a havoc there.

But the two brothers did not seem to care two hoots for such occurrences. Indra realised that the two, through a certain specific hymn, were concentrated on the Divine Mother. Nothing could disturb one who did that.

Indra returned to heaven and summoned the god of love and said: "Near Badarikashram, on the bank of the Mandakini, Nara and Narayana are seen en-

grossed in trance. They have already mastered much spiritual power. I have no idea how they intend to use it. We ought not to let them carry on their asceticism any further. I tried to terrify them, but could not. You can disturb them in your own way. Haven't you foiled the efforts of so many yogis in the past? Please take the nymphs along and do the needful."

Kamadeva, the god of love, was generally happy at such assignments. But this time he kept quiet.

"Why do you look pensive?" asked Indra.

"Well, I must tell you that you are asking me to undertake a very difficult task. Yogis whom I disturbed earlier were meditating on one of the great Gods. But Nara and Narayana are meditating on the Divine Mother. One who does that in the proper way is not affected by my power," explained Kamadeva.

"But you must do something about it. If you cannot achieve the purpose directly, please take recourse to some indirect methods. *We cannot just shut our eyes to their endeavour!*" said Indra.

Kamadeva was not enthu-

siastic. Even then he promised to do his best.

He sent the spirit of Spring to Badarikashram immediately. Then he went himself, accompanied by some of the celestial nymphs.

The region where the two brothers meditated grew charming with an abundance of flowers, the cooing of birds, and sweet breeze.

This sudden change in the atmosphere surprised Nara and Narayana. They opened their eyes. Never before had the region looked so beautiful.

Was someone doing magic?—they wondered.

As soon as they opened their eyes, the nymphs began dancing before them.

The two brothers gazed at them amusingly for a while. Then they said, "You have done your best. Better stop now and relax. Indra is audacious enough to imagine that he can disturb us. We can, if we please, create far greater beauties."

Narayana suddenly slapped his own thigh. A maiden of indescribable beauty sprang up. She was Urvasi. She was followed by the appearance of some more beauties.



The nymphs felt ashamed. Hands folded, they said, "Pardon us, O great souls. We have indeed disturbed the poise of many an ascetic. But today we accept defeat. But we are lucky in a way. Had Indra not commanded us to come here, we could not have got a chance to behold you!"

Nara and Narayana smiled. "Take this new nymph along with you," said Narayana, "and present her to Indra. May Indra, the gods, and you all live happily. You can go," said Narayana.

"O great souls, kindly do not ask us to go away. Let Urvasi



and those created along with her go over to heaven and serve Indra. We will be happy to be here!" said the nymphs.

"What do you mean?" asked Narayana.

"Since you have put a question, we should honestly answer it. But you ought to deem it your duty to fulfil our desire. Well, we'd be happy to marry you and live here. We don't wish to return to heaven," said the nymphs.

"What!" cried out Narayana "Is it for this that we have been carrying on our askesis, defying the fury of nature and hurdles created by Indra?"

"Why, what is wrong with us? Who can dream of any greater happiness than marrying us and having us to serve them" asked the nymphs.

Narayana realised that it had been a blunder on their part to talk to the nymphs. They should have ignored them. They should not have created more beautiful nymphs to ridicule them. They had already got involved in their affairs!

They wished to scare them away: But to get angry would be yet another mistake.

"Let's be peaceful in our dealing with them." Nara told Narayana.

Narayana told the nymphs: "We will remain ascetics in this life. If we are not disturbed again, we can consider having you for our wives in our next incarnation."

The nymphs bowed to the ascetics and then left for heaven along with Urvasi.

Indra and the other gods were most pleasantly surprised to see Urvasi. They praised the unique power of Nara and Narayana.

In the next era, Nara and Narayana were born as Arjuna and Sri Krishna. It happened like this:

One day Bhudevi, the spirit



of the earth, met Indra and told him how harassed she felt because of a number of evil elements dominating the earth. Those elements were Jarasandha, Shishupala, Kamsa, Rukmi, Naraka, Salva, Keshi, Dhenuka, Vatasaka, among others.

Bhudevi recollected how in the past she had been troubled by Hiranyaksha when Vishnu, descending as the *Varaha*, came to her rescue.

Said Indra: "Bhudevi, I have hardly any power to help you. Let us go to Brahma. He might be able to do something."

They met Brahma. "O Lord, it is time for the Era of Darkness, *Kaliyuga*, to begin. That is why the rulers have forgotten their compassion and duty. They are possessed by the demons,"

said Bhudevi.

"Bhudevi, if one can help you in eradicating this evil, he must be Vishnu. Let's go to him," said Brahma.

Bhudevi and Indra followed Brahma.

Before Vishnu Brahma narrated the plight of Bhudevi. He told Vishnu that it would be right for him to take birth on the earth.

"It is necessary to have the sanction of Yogamaya if I am to incarnate on the earth. To incarnate in a human form is not a happy experience for me. You know well how much I had to suffer as Rama. Pray to the Divine Mother. Should she consent, I shall take birth on the earth and destroy those evil elements," said Vishnu.





Blows and Shock

In the court of Vidarbha all were in a light mood. The courtjester was telling funny stories and playing pranks with the courtiers. There were peals of laughter.

A messenger came in and told the king how two kingdoms in the frontier, which were at war with each other, had been reduced to utter misery.

"My lord, the war is over, but the people have lost everything and are sad," said the messenger.

The mood of the court changed. All stopped laughing and looked pensive.

The jester was annoyed at the interruption. He took off his turban and threw it on the floor. Then he kicked it. That was his way of conveying his displeasure.

But it so happened that there was a hornet in the turban. It

stung him. He cried in pain. The courtiers laughed.

The king looked at his minister. "I wonder at human nature," he said. "Our courtiers have nothing to do with those people of the faraway kingdoms. Even then all looked gloomy at the news of the suffering of those people. But they laughed at the jester who suffered from real pain!"

"Human nature, my lord, is queer, indeed. But it is not essentially bad. Man often does not understand his own behaviour," observed the minister.

"That is right, my minister. But I do not understand how one can laugh at another's discomfiture if human nature is not essentially bad!" commented the king again.

"My lord, our courtiers felt a sympathy for the people of

those two kingdoms. That made them sad at heart. Our jester's is a mere physical pain. And we are accustomed to laugh when he makes faces....."

"Wait," the king said interrupting the minister. "You said that the jester's was a mere physical pain. Do you mean to say that a mental pain gave more pain than a physical pain?"

"What doubt is there about it, my lord?" commented the minister.

"I have my doubts. Can you prove your point?" asked the king.

"Let me try."

The minister took the disguise

of an old man and walked towards the Kali temple outside the town. He saw a young man named Vikat coming from the opposite direction. He knew Vikat who was a cheat and who feigned to be a holy man.

The minister dropped a diamond ring on the ground and pretended to be looking for it.

Vikat saw the ring and picked it up in the twinkle of an eye and looked at the old man.

He heard the old man murmuring to himself, "All is over! How to show my face to my son? What use my remaining alive if I lost his sacred ring?"

"Old man, what are you loo-



king for?" asked Vikat.

"A diamond ring, my son. My eyes are dim. Can you find it for me? If you can, I shall make a gift of my diamond necklace to you," said the minister.

Vikat passed a minute looking here and there and then exclaimed, "Here it is!" He handed over the ring to the old man with one hand, receiving the necklace with the other.

The minister had taken a few steps when Vikat caught up with him. The minister looked at him with curiosity.

"I have a doubt, old man!" said Vikat.

"What is it, son?"

"The diamond necklace is surely costlier than the diamond ring!"

"Right, my son, twenty times costlier!" agreed the minister.

"How then did you give away the necklace for the ring?" asked Vikat, quite surprised.

"Well, my son, that is a top-secret. But I should tell you. The ring was a gift to my son from a great Himalayan Yogi. It is charged with a certain extraordinary power. If one appears before the king wearing it, the king would at once surrender his throne to him!" said the minister in a whisper.



"Take back your necklace and give me the ring," said Vikat.

"Do I look like a fool?" quipped the minister.

Vikat pounced upon the minister and tried to snatch the ring. The minister let him succeed, but not before giving him a dozen heavy blows.

Vikat, armed with the ring, ran to the court. He appeared before the king and smiled, meaningfully.

The king was busy. He took no notice of Vikat.

Vikat coughed and came closer. The king saw him, but did not care.

"My lord, look at this ring!" said Vikat impatiently.

"Yes?" the king said, looking at it.

"Get off your throne, will you? You ought to surrender

your throne to me!" shouted Vikat.

"Why, this fellow is mad!" cried out all the courtiers. Guards stepped forward to take hold of Vikat.

Suddenly the minister sprang forth and put off his own disguise. Vikat stared at him and recognised him. He realised that he had been the object of a practical joke. He swooned away.

The minister asked the guards to carry him to the physician's house. Then he looked at the king and said, "My lord, he bore a dozen heavy blows only minutes ago. But a mental shock made him swoon away. Does this not show which agony is more painful—the physical or the mental?"

The king nodded.



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